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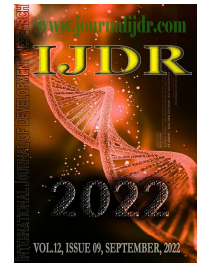
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## EVALUATION OF FEMALE GENDER VIOLENCE PREVALENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic started in 2019 and caused various modifications in our social structure. Social isolation at home during the pandemic was an obligation that posed challenges, especially for women who often needed to live with their abusers. This review has the objective of profiling women abused within their household during the pandemic. Method: This study represents a qualitative approach, in the format of an integrative review of literature. The following search descriptors "Covid-19", "SARS-CoV2", "Women", "violence", and "domestic violence" were applied to the databases Medline, Lilacs, and Scielo for the search period of 2020 and 2021. The platform Rayyan was applied for research filtering. Results: The research returned 523 articles, of which 14 were included in the review. Among the selected articles, the main types of violence declared by participants were: physical assault, psychological abuse, and sexual abuse. Conclusion: the COVID-19 pandemic brought a significant increase in the number of reports for abuse, especially of psychological, physical and sexual origin. Nevertheless the specificities of the women involved and the facts inherent to their cases also contributed to domestic violence.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and brought along several modifications in social structure due to measures taken to contain the spread of the virus, such as: use of masks, social isolation, and the race for vaccine development. One of the groups who suffered the most notorious effects was the female population. Social isolation and staying at home during the pandemic was a condition that revealed challenges, especially for women, who often had to spend more time with their abusers. Furthermore, a rush of emotional overload spilled over due to the death of loved ones and financial, structural, social, and political instability (KOSHAN, MOSHER, WIEGERS, 2020). Amid this chaotic landscape, another issue intensified, this time lifelong and emanated at the resurgence of the patriarchy: violence against women (CHAGAS, OLIVEIRA, MACENA, 2022). The patriarchy refers to a system of domination and power in which the male gender is privileged by impairing its feminine counterpart. The achievement of this space of domination requires the idea of possession over relations, body, and social expressions of femininity,

which leads to the enforcement of moral, sexual, behavioral, economic, and sociocultural standards that reinforce these relations, such as the normalization of female submission in the so called "traditional Brazilian families", justified even biblically (ROMERO, DAMASIO, TERRA, 2021; CANDIOTTO, 2021). During events of sanitary chaos, such as the pandemic due to Sars Cov-2, these characteristics were exacerbated and enabled spaces of violence and rights encroachment more evidently and aggressively, since health demands were more urgent than those declared secondary (which includes violence against women). This phenomenon has been termed "Tyranny of the Urgent" (REIS, et al, 2020). Still, historically, most people have defended the institutionalization of being a woman as being a caregiver. This ideal charges women with efforts to care for the sick in their households and families, exposing themselves to more risks of contamination in a situation such as the one described above. In other words, women, during the pandemic, have potentially been exposed to more risks to their survival, either due to sanitary chaos, such as Covid-19, or due to social chaos, such as violence against women (REIS, et al, 2020).

Confronted with this issue, we observed the need to build an integrated review with articles published during the pandemic, so as to evaluate the contents of reports of cases of abuse against women, assessing the prevalence of gender and the profile of women abused within their household.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a qualitative approach in the format of integrative review of literature, a method that seeks to systematically collect and summarize certain findings about a topic or a specific question, contributing to the advancement of the issue at hand (MENDES; SILVEIRA; GALVÃO, 2008). To make the method of integrative review more systematic, some important steps were defined, ensuring the quality of the study by following the protocol established by Mendes: 1- Topic identification and elaboration of the guiding question; 2- establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion and for literature examination; 3- study categorization; 4- Evaluation of research included in the integrative review; 5- Interpretation of results; 6- Summary of knowledge (MENDES; SILVEIRA; GALVÃO, 2008). The research comprised scientific articles in the databases of digital libraries of scientific journals, such as Medline, Lilacs, and Scielo, between 2020 and 2021 with the search descriptors "Covid-19", "SARS-CoV2", "Women", "violence", and "domestic violence".

**Establishment of the guiding question:** With the objective of guaranteeing methodological and scientific rigor in this integrative review, we established a guiding question in line with the issue analyzed. The guiding question for this research was: evaluate the prevalence of domestic violence toward women above 18 years of age during the pandemic.

**Establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion and bibliographic analysis:** The inclusion of studies for a detailed analysis followed the criteria: scientific articles, research generated exclusively with cis or trans women, studies in Portuguese or English, primary articles, and within the timeframe of the years 2020 and 2021. The criteria for exclusion were: duplicate entries, research not contemplating the guiding question, articles developed from secondary sources, reflective, opinion, exposition, or perspective articles, letters, handbooks, correspondence, portfolio, books, and studies resulting from non-official media (non-scientific journals, newspapers, and social media). For the bibliographic research, three databases were considered: Medline and Lilacs, accessed through the digital library of health (BVS), and Scielo. The descriptors were extracted from the website Descriptors in health sciences (DeCS), which resulted in: "Covid-19", "SARS-CoV2", "Women", "violence", and "domestic violence" in English, with the goal of guaranteeing a broader scope in our searches. With the objective of guaranteeing more scrutiny and quality from the resulting studies, we established the rule that the descriptor "Women" should remain in all cross-reference analyses, with the Boolean operator "AND" making the intersection between the terms, so the crosses were women AND violence AND covid-19, women AND violence AND sars-cov-2, women AND domestic violence AND covid-19, women AND domestic violence AND sars-cov-2 as well as the filters of timeframe, articles, and languages.

**Research categorization:** The first phase of an integrative review involves categorizing the research with the objective of extracting data with the rigor derived from the study's criteria of inclusion and exclusion. A software for article management name Ryvan (OUZZANI *et al.*, 2016) was used in this phase. Two researchers, R.L.A and E.L.C, were responsible for article selection, and disputes were resolved by a third participant called P.A.O.F. Firstly, the articles were categorized with regard to duplicity of content found in the database. Next, an analysis of the studies' titles and abstracts helped group the research and discard the articles produced from secondary data, letters, handbooks, correspondence, portfolios, books, and studies resulting from non-official media (non-scientific journals,

newspapers, and social media). This phase required a more rigorous audit of the articles, in which they were fully accessed to identify the type of research when the abstract did not contain such information. The articles that underwent this initial categorization were directed to the next analysis, which consisted of establishing what articles answered this research's guiding question. The ones that fulfilled this requirement were then inspected for resorting only to primary sources.

**Evaluation of the studies included in the integrative review:** The studies included in the review were analyzed using Excel, with the variables title, author, and main results. After the phase of study evaluation came the phases following revision, i.e. 5- Result interpretation and 6- knowledge summary.

## RESULTS

523 articles appeared in the initial stage of study search and selection, of which 14 included the revision that appears in figure 1. In relation to studies' continents and countries, 7 sources came from Asia, i.e. India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia (50%); 4 sources from Africa, i.e. Ethiopia, South Africa, and Democratic Republic of the Congo (28.57%); Europe, with one source pertaining to the Czech Republic (7.14%); regions pertaining to Europe and Asia, such as one study from Turkey (7.14%); and one study corresponding to the Arab regions, which refers to parts of Africa and Asia (7.14%). With relation to language, all studies (100%) were in English. Regarding the approach to the issue, 12 studies followed a quantitative approach (84.71%), and 2 a qualitative approach (14.28%). In relation to the studies' databases, the studies were found in Scielo (n=36), Lilac (n=70) and Medline (n=417). The description for the studies included in this revision is in table 1.

Regarding the vocabulary employed in the studies, the researchers employed different terms for the violence perpetrated by the spouse: 6 studies employed the term "domestic violence" referring to an act of aggression caused uniquely by a spouse; 7 employed the term "assault by domestic partner", and only 1 study distinguished "domestic violence" from "assault by domestic partner".

In order to enhance the treatment of article results, they were divided in topic categories based on the more prevalent findings in the research, following six classes corresponding to: type of violence, socioeconomic data, cause of violence, and others. The development of the table involved numbering the articles according to Table 1, and the attribution of the variables for type of violence were based on the terms employed in the studies of Guedes and Gomes (2014), and Coelho, da Silva, and Lindner (2014), such as shown in Table 2.

From the articles analyzed, we could verify from the results that, among the kinds of existing violence, the most reported by participants was physical violence (physical assault) in 11 articles, psychological violence (10 articles), and sexual violence (9 articles). Regarding the types of violence least reported in the research, in decreasing order: verbal, economic, negligence, and controlling behavior (respectively with 5, 3, 1, and 1 articles for each). Regarding socioeconomic data, we could verify that social repercussions are of great relevance to comprehend violence against women.

We could identify that schooling was one of the factors most addressed by women, with citation in 7 articles, followed by financial/social class (7 articles), age (7 articles), and location/region/country (4 articles). Furthermore, another significant factor analyzed was the evaluation of motives for violence, which included job loss/unemployment, psychiatric illness, temperament, use of legal/illegal substances, family affairs, and female empowerment. There were other factors that contributed to violence against women, such as previous violence, issues related to pregnancy, previous/unwanted marriage, and number of children.

**Table 1. Summary of the studies included in the review Recife, 2022**

Article title	Authors	Main Results
1. Domestic violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic: Turkey sample.	Adibelli, Derya; Sümen, Adem; Teskereci, Gamze;	The most prevalent types of abuse were of emotional, verbal, sexual, and physical nature.
2. Domestic Violence Against Married Women During the COVID-19 Quarantine in Saudi Arabia.	Alharbi, F.F <i>et al.</i> ,	The self-reported prevalence rate of domestic violence before the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine was 25.4%, and 16.6% during lockdowns or other confinements
3. Intimate partner violence among Arab women before and during the COVID-19 lockdown.	El-Nimr, N. A <i>et al.</i> ,	Half of the women surveyed related at least one exposure to IPV. Psychological abuse was the most prevalent among the types of IPV, followed by verbal violence.
4. Intimate Partners Violence against Women during a COVID-19 Lockdown Period: Results of an Online Survey in 7 Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo.	Ditekemena, J. D <i>et al.</i> ,	Number of participants: 2002 women. Quantitative analysis. The most recurrent forms of IPV were verbal, physical, and sexual
5. Domestic violence and psychological problems in married women during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown: A community-based survey.	Indu, P. V <i>et al.</i> ;	Domestic violence reportedly aggravated disorders involving anxiety and depression
6. Frequency and determinants of domestic violence against Iranian women during the COVID-19 pandemic: a national cross-sectional survey.	Yari, A <i>et al.</i> ;	The average scores of domestic violence regarding physical, emotional, and sexual abuse were respectively 40,36 (SD: 22,79), 32,56 (SD: 19,01), and 28,99 (SD: 16,57)
7. Intersectional tension: a qualitative study of the effects of the COVID-19 response on survivors of violence against women in urban India.	Huq, M <i>et al.</i> ,	Family violence was predominantly of emotional, economic, and physical origin, as along with dominating behavior (cohesive control)
8. The COVID-19 Pandemic and Intimate Partner Violence against Women in the Czech Republic: Incidence and Associated Factors.	Plášilová, L <i>et al.</i> ,	There was an increase in IPV during the pandemic, but no significant changes in assault comparing the first and the second wave of COVID-19.
9. 'I will rather be killed by corona than by him': Experiences of abused women seeking shelter during South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown.	Dekel, Bianca; Abrahams, Naeemah	Most women reported in tears the difficulties of being forced (according to government regulations) to self-isolate with their abusers
10.The Impact of COVID-19 Related Lockdown on the Prevalence of Spousal Violence Against Women in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.	Mahmood, K.I <i>et al.</i> ,	The prevalence of any violence increased significantly from 32.1% during pre-lockdown periods to 38.7% during lockdowns and similar confinements
11 A Cross-Sectional Study of the Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Violence, Menstruation, Genital Tract Health, and Contraception Use among Women in Jordan.	Aolyamat, I.	Number of participants: 200 women. In total, 20,5% of participants suffered with the raise in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic
12 The pandemic paradox: domestic violence and happiness of women.	Haq, W; Raza, S. H; Mahmood, T;	Of all women, 65% related not suffering any abuse during lockdown or similar events, but the remaining 35% disclosed suffering some kind of abuse during such events
13 Prevalence and Associated Factors of Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Women During COVID-19 Pandemic Restrictions: A Community-Based Study.	Tadesse, A.W <i>et al.</i> ,	The main form of IPV was physical, psychological, and sexual abuse
14 Intimate partner violence against reproductive age women during COVID-19 pandemic in northern Ethiopia 2020: a community-based cross-sectional study.	Gebrewahd, G. T; Gebremeskel, G. G; Tadesse, D.B;	Psychological abuse was the predominant category of violence in the study

Source: generated by the authors

**Table 2–Article segregation by topic category, definition, variables considered, and reference identification Recife, 2022.**

Category	Definition	Variables	Articles
Types of abuse	Use of physical force or power against one's self or specific groups causing harm to others. The types of abuse can be of many natures. (COELHO; DA SILVA; LINDNER, 2014)	Psychological Moral Property Sexual Physical Negligence Controlling behaviors	1 2 3 6 7 9 10 12 13 14 1 3 4 12 14 1 3 7 1 2 3 4 6 7 10 13 14 1 2 3 4 6 7 9 10 12 13 14 7 7
Socioeconomic data	Stratification of individuals or families according to data aggregation of many natures. (ALVES; SOARES, 2009)	Age Schooling Social class/financial Region/Location/Country	4 5 6 8 12 13 14 1 3 4 5 6 12 13 14 1 3 4 6 7 8 9 12 3 4 9 12
Motivesforviolence	They are the motives due to which the aggression perpetrated by another party was established. (CHESNAIS, 1999)	Unemployment/Out of the workforce Temperament Family affairs Psychiatric illness <sup>1</sup> Empowerment Use of legal or illegal substances	1 3 7 9 12 3 9 3 5 8 12 12 7 9 13
Other factors		Previous violence Issues related to pregnancy Previous/unwanted marriage Number of children	1 2 3 7 9 10 4 6 1 2 6 8 12

Source: Generated by the authors. <sup>1</sup> Related exclusively to anxiety and depression

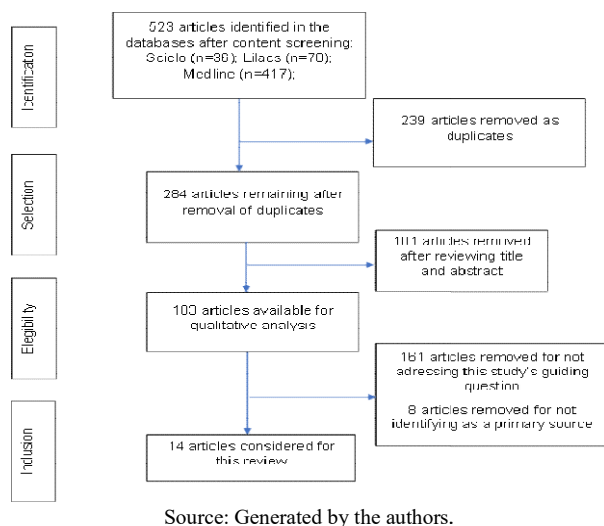


Figure 1. Flowchart of data obtained. Recife, 2022

## DISCUSSION

### Category 1: Types of abuse

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), abuse is characterized by a public health issue due to its repercussions at an individual and collective level, requiring the development of specific public policies and specialized services to tend to such phenomenon (MORGADO, 2006). Abuse can afflict both men and women, however, the rules imposed by the patriarchy cause a singular event that inflicts the male superiority, delegating men the role of head of the family and the right to the female body. To keep to his position, men often use norms that allow abuse to reaffirm their position to his family and community. Therefore, we have a specific and frequent type of violence: gender abuse that affects almost one third of women in their lifetime (BOYER *et al.*, 2022). Due to this, there was an exponential increase in violence against women during the pandemic of COVID-19 (2, 3, 11), but it is necessary to highlight that containment measures for the virus, such as social isolation, are not responsible for the spread of violence against women, but rather a catalyst or aggravator (MARCOLINO *et al.*, 2021). As verified in the literature review, one can identify psychological abuse as one of the most reported findings, with an exponential increase described in the articles (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14). Intimate partner violence (IPV) can also make victims more exposed to depressive disorders (8), as corroborated by studies previous to the pandemic, such as one that indicated that psychological/emotional abuse was greatest among women in Iran, with a prevalence of 44% (KARGAR JAHROMI *et al.*, 2015). Physical abuse also represents one of the most distinctive forms of gender violence, and a constant variable in the reviewed literature (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14). Such finding corroborates the data found by Souza & Faria (2022), since physical abuse was the most employed method of propagating violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 38,3% recurrence (SOUZA; FARIAS, 2022). Finally, sexual abuse, was the third most recurrent datapoint related to forms of violence. This kind of abuse was less representative than psychological or physical abuse. In the bibliographic analysis, respectively for articles number 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 14, only 12.11%, 16.6%, 6%, 21.2%, 17%, 9.5%, 13.8%, 5.3% of cases reported by these studies involved this type of abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding may be related as well to a decrease in sexual abuse, especially during the initial months of the pandemic (ROMA, 2020) and a reduction in the demand by women for centers focused on sexual abuse and domestic violence as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic (BARBARA *et al.*, 2020).

**Category 2: Socioeconomic data:** Social indicators are developed from an issue that requires a specific interest in a given time and space. Through the development of social indicators, it is possible to evaluate and implement public policies to cater to specific people or

groups. In this way, it is impossible to develop government interventions without knowing the reality in which one seeks to intervene (PARAHOS *et al.*, 2013). In light of this, the research that involves purely social data must take into account the socioeconomic aspects of the articles in which they will be analyzed as to understand the nuances involved in the studied phenomenon. The study "Domestic violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic: Turkey sample" brings forth one of the most important data regarding the issue of income, in which the women who declared an income higher than their expenses suffered less abuse. This finding can be characterized by the female empowerment factor, which allows women to make more decisions in family affairs (MARTINS, TEIXEIRA, 2020). Schooling also represented an important research variable, in which higher levels are associated with lower exposure to psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (3 and 6). Women with higher education present more chances of suffering zero violence (12), whereas lower levels of schooling are not only associated with domestic violence, but also proved to be a booster for the development of depressive disorders (5). The study by Leite *et al.* (2015) describes that abusers in the study, 71.4% of participants, had only up to secondary education, resulting in a positive correlation between lower schooling and psychological abuse (LEITE *et al.*, 2019). The impact of region in abuse against women during the pandemic must also be assessed, since the studies indicate that women who live in urban regions have a higher chance of achieving a zero level of abuse compared to rural areas (12). Such finding corroborates research in Brazil, where the Eastern rural area of the Federal District and areas neighboring the urban areas have a higher chance of committing violence in the period of the pandemic when compared to regions with more inhabitants (MADEIRA, DILL, FURTADO, 2021).

**Category 3: Motives for violence:** The issue of unemployment during the pandemic constitutes one of the most problematic factors for the spread of violence against women. The studies indicate that women who were exposed to physical, psychological, verbal, and financial abuse often also had husbands who lost their jobs during the pandemic (3). Thus, emotional and/or financial dependence on the partner represents one of the most important motives for abuse against women (MARANHÃO, 2020). The relation between legal and illegal substances as harbingers of violence against women is frequently discussed in the literature, especially during the period of confinement/lockdown due to COVID-19, which involved an increase in the consumption of substances like alcohol (QUEIROGA *et al.*, 2021). Women with husbands who consume alcohol and cigarettes are 3x more likely to suffer VPI (13), and stress factors like job loss hindered men who use drugs from sustaining their addiction, which resulted in violence against women (9). The consumption of drugs can increase in up to seven times the chances of domestic violence (RABELLO; JUNIOR, 2007). Besides, alcohol was the drug most often consumed in the family by participants, according to a study by RABELLO & JÚNIOR (2007).

## CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, an exponential increase in reports of violence against women was identified, especially in relation to psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Furthermore, the specificities of women such as age, social class, schooling, and region or location in which they live were determining factors for the violence perpetrated during the period of confinement (lockdown or otherwise). There is evidence that, beyond carrying out the responsibilities of the household, especially due to cultural factors, events inherent to women in many societies contributed to violence, such as unemployment, family affairs, and even female empowerment. Faced with such evidence, this study brings an important social contribution due to its impact as base for future public policies with the goal of reducing the scale of violence against women stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and from possible future pandemics.



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